

PREFACE

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) has been prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Federal regulations on procedures for preparing environmental documents, Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Act, and Michigan and Federal environmental laws and regulations.

NEPA, enacted in 1969, requires that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be prepared for all major actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The EIS must address the environmental effects of alternatives for the proposed Federal action it describes. Such actions include Federal projects, state and local programs funded by Federal assistance, and private development authorized by Federal permits.

Part 771 of 23 CFR (Highways) states that alternative courses of action must be evaluated and decisions should be made in the best overall public interest. The decisions should be based upon a balanced consideration of the need for safe and efficient transportation, social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed transportation improvement, and national, state, and local environmental protection goals. In addition, the alternatives should connect logical termini and be of sufficient length to address environmental matters on a broad scope. Technical Advisory T 6640.8A of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) states that all reasonable alternatives under consideration must be developed to a comparable level of detail so that their comparative merits may be evaluated. This US-131 Improvement Study Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) complies with these requirements.

Section 4(f) of the DOT Act of 1966 states that it is national policy that special efforts should be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside and public park and recreation lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites. The Secretary of Transportation may approve a project that requires the use of publicly owned land from a public park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site only after evaluation and determination that no other prudent and feasible alternatives have been identified. A Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation is included in this DEIS.

In addition, in keeping with FHWA regulations and guidelines, an extensive public involvement program was developed and implemented for this project. Early coordination and scoping activities have informed the public and appropriate agencies about the proposed US-131 Improvement Study. The public involvement program continues and affords the public and agencies opportunities for further review and comment.

Upon completion of this DEIS a public hearing will be held to help select a Recommended Alternative. A Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will then be prepared with the Recommended Alternative, followed by a Record of Decision (ROD) document.